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(54) Magnetic recording medium and method of producing the same.

(57) A magnetic recording medium has a non-magnetic substrate, a magnetic layer formed on the surface of the substrate from a ferromagnetic material, and a protective film formed on the magnetic layer. The protective film is constituted by a singular layer of continuous or dispersed molecular structures in which carbon element and an element constituting the magnetic layer are bonded directly or indirectly through oxygen and at least one fluorine element is bonded to the carbon element. This magnetic recording medium can be produced by a method comprising preparing a substrate of a non-magnetic material, forming a magnetic layer of a ferromagnetic material on the surface of the substrate, and forming, by a plasma CVD method, a protective film of a fluorine-containing molecular body having a thickness not greater than a value equivalent to 5 Å on the surface of the magnetic layer.

MAGNETIC RECORDING MEDIUM
AND METHOD OF PRODUCING THE SAME

1 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION:

The present invention relates to a magnetic recording medium suited for use in recording and playback of
5 signals such as audio signals, video signals and data signals, and also to a method of producing such a magnetic recording medium.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART:

In recent years, there is a trend for reduction in
10 the size and weight of audio and visual magnetic recording and playback devices, and the recording density is increasing year by year. On the other hand, studies have been made for development of perpendicular magnetic recording systems in order to attain higher recording density. Studies have been
15 made also for development of recording mediums in which thin film or layer of a magnetic material is formed on a substrate by vapor deposition method such as evaporation, sputtering or other known measure (such types of medium will be referred to as "vapor-deposited medium", hereinafter),
20 besides the coating type medium in which a magnetic layer is formed by coating a magnetic material in the form of mixture with a binder.

Fig. 4 is a sectional view of a vapor-deposited medium. As will be seen from this Figure, the vapor-

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1 deposited medium has a substrate 1 made of, for example,
polyethylene, a magnetic layer 2 consisting mainly of a
magnetic material such as Co, Cr, Ni or the like, and a
protective layer 3. The surface of the substrate 1 remote
5 from the magnetic layer 2 may have been subjected to a back
coat treatment or a back surface treatment in order to
improve the running performance.

A description will be made hereinunder as to the
conventional vapor-deposited medium. In order to allow an
10 efficient use of the magnetic characteristics of the
materials such as Co, Cr, Ni and Fe, the magnetic layer 2 is
formed directly on the substrate 1 by vapor deposition
method such as evaporation, sputtering or the like, rather
than by coating the magnetic material in the form of a
15 mixture with a binder. Therefore, the surface of the
magnetic layer 2 is made only of a metal or a metal oxide,
so that, when the recording medium is used in an audio tape
recorder, video tape recorder (VTR), floppy disk drive
(FDD), etc. a large friction is caused between the magnetic
20 head guide roller and the magnetic layer 2. This friction
in turn causes a wear or damage of the magnetic layer 2 and
the magnetic head and the guide roller, as well as noises due
to a stick slip. In order to avoid these problems,
hitherto, it has been proposed to reduce the friction between
25 the magnetic layer 2 and the stationary parts such as the
magnetic head and the guide roller, by covering the magnetic
layer 2 with a protective film 3 having a lubricating effect
or by suitably selecting the surface roughness of the

1 magnetic layer 2.

Two types of method have been proposed for the purpose of forming the protective film 3: namely, a method called "wet process" and a method called "dry process".

5 In the wet process, a lubricant dissolved in a solvent is applied to the magnetic layer 2 and then the solvent is evaporated by, for example, heating such as to leave a lubricant protective film 3 on the magnetic layer 2. On the other hand, in the dry process, the protective film 3 is
10 formed by depositing a lubricant directly on the magnetic layer 2 by, for example, evaporation, sputtering, plasma CVD and so forth, without using any solvent. In the conventional dry process, the lubricant is in most cases an organic one and the thickness of the protective film usually ranges
15 between 50 and 1000 Å, as reported in Japanese Patent Unexamined Publication Nos. 154643/1984, 35331/1985, 171029/1984, 213031/1984, 102330/1983 and 135440/1982.

The conventional magnetic recording film with a protective film, however, have suffered from the following
20 disadvantages.

Referring first to the protective film formed by the wet process, the protective film tends to have island-type construction when the film thickness is small, because the film is formed by evaporating the solvent in which the
25 lubricant is dissolved. This means that the magnetic layer 2 is partially uncovered such as to cause a large friction in the portions where the magnetic layer 2 reveals. Such a protective film is quite unsatisfactory from the view points

1 of wear and corrosion resistance. The protective film
formed by the wet process, therefore, should have a thick-
ness not smaller than 200 \AA , resulting in a large space loss.
With the information, when the recording wavelength is
5 0.9 \mu m , the playback loss is as large as about 1.6 dB when
the thickness of the protective film is 200 \AA . The playback
loss is much greater in the device of perpendicular
recording type which is intended for higher recording
density. The wet process involves further disadvantages
10 such as impossibility of application of some types of
lubricant due to repellent effect on the surface of the
magnetic layer 2. In addition, when the film thickness is
as large as 200 \AA , the lubricant tends to come off such as
to be deposited to the portions around the magnetic head,
15 resulting in troubles such as clogging and drop out. The
wet process also involves a risk of contamination by foreign
matters and dusts transferred from air and tools, resulting
in defective products.

The dry process is superior and more promising
20 than the wet process from the view point of contamination
prevention and uniformity of film. It is reported that the
protective film formed by the dry process, mainly consisting
of hydrocarbon and organic material containing hydrocarbon,
has to have a thickness of 50 \AA or more from the view point
25 of wear resistance. Such a large film thickness increases
the tendency for the lubricant to come off so as to be
deposited to the area around the magnetic head, resulting
in clogging and drop out, as in the case of the protective

1 film formed by the wet process.

The conventional dry process also encounters problems such as difficulty in the control of the properties of the film and poor reproducibility. In addition, this
5 process is not suited to mass-production because the film forming speed is much lower than that of the wet process.

Accordingly, an object of the invention is to provide a magnetic recording medium in which the friction coefficient is reduced and the wear resistance is improved
10 in the surface, while minimizing the reduction in the output power due to the presence of the protective film, as well as a method of producing such a magnetic recording medium, thereby overcoming the above-described problems of the prior art.

15 To this end, according to one aspect of the invention, there is provided a magnetic recording medium comprising a substrate of, for example, polyester, a magnetic layer formed on the substrate and consisting mainly of a ferromagnetic material such as Co, Cr, Ni, Fe or the like, and a
20 singular-layered film of a fluorine-containing molecule, i.e., fluorine-containing molecules, having a film thickness not greater than $5 \overset{\circ}{\text{A}}$, formed on the surface of the magnetic material by the plasma polymerization method.

Through an intense study, the inventors have found
25 that a magnetic recording medium with a small friction coefficient and superior wear resistance is obtainable by using, as the protective film, a singular-layered film of fluorine-containing molecules, i.e., fluorine-containing

1 molecules, having a thickness of not greater than 5 Å.

While a large film thickness tends to increase the risk for the film to come off due to, for example, friction with respect to the head resulting in troubles such as clogging
5 and drop out, the singular-layered fluorine-containing molecules exhibit a greater durability against wear because the film material molecules make a substantially singular-molecular bond to the surface of the magnetic layer. At the same time, the friction coefficient is decreased by
10 virtue of containment of the fluorine.

With the fluorine-containing molecular protective film, a film thickness of not greater than 5 Å can be formed effectively by a plasma CVD method which is preferably conducted under the following condition for attaining high
15 plasma controllability and stability. Namely, the plasma CVD method is carried out by perfectly separating the plasma generating section from the magnetic recording medium forming section. The plasma generating section generates a plasma which contains ion nucleus, neutral nucleus, radical
20 nucleus and electrons, and the plasma is blown against the surface of the magnetic layer, thereby forming the protective film.

The above and other objects, features and advantages of the invention will become clear from the following
25 description of the preferred embodiment when the same is read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a schematic illustration of a plasma CVD apparatus for forming a fluorine-containing organic protective film on a magnetic recording medium in accordance
5 with the invention;

Fig. 2 is a partly enlarged view of a plasma CVD apparatus of the invention;

Fig. 3 is a sectional view of a magnetic recording medium in accordance with the invention;

10 Fig. 4 is a sectional view of a conventional magnetic recording medium;

Fig. 5 is a diagram showing the result of an ESCA analysis test on the surface of a magnetic recording medium in accordance with the invention; and

15 Fig. 6 is a diagram showing the kinematic coefficient of friction exhibited by the magnetic recording medium of the invention during repetitional running and stopping.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

20 Fig. 3 is a sectional view of a magnetic recording medium in accordance with the invention. The construction of this magnetic recording medium is substantially the same as that of the conventional recording medium shown in Fig. 4, but is distinguished from the conventional medium by the
25 fact that the protective film is made of a fluorine-containing singular-layered film having a thickness of not greater than $5 \overset{\circ}{\text{A}}$ as well as by the production method.

1 It is practically impossible to measure the thick-
ness of the protective film consisting of fluorine-containing
molecules, having a thickness ^{not greater} of ⁰than 5 Å. According to
the invention, therefore, the protective film is experi-
5 mentally formed while the recording medium is maintained
stationary, and therefore the film forming speed and the
film area may be determined. Using these data, the mean
thickness of the protective film formed on a running medium
is calculated by determining the film forming time from the
10 medium running speed and the medium area, and then determin-
ing the film thickness from the film forming time and the
film forming speed.

The values of film thickness mentioned hereinunder,
unless they do not exceed 20 ⁰Å, are the values which are
15 calculated by the above-explained method. Film thicknesses
exceeding 20 ⁰Å are measurable by means of an ellipsometer,
so that actually measured values apply to such large
thicknesses.

Fig. 1 schematically shows the outline of an
20 example of the apparatus suited for use in the formation of
the fluorine-containing molecular protective film. The
magnetic recording medium is adapted to run on a driving
system which is composed of a pay-out roller 12, can roller
9 and a take-up roller 10 arranged in a vacuum vessel 8.
25 The vacuum vessel 8 accommodates also a plasma tube 4 which
carries at its end a plasma outlet 4b arranged to oppose a
magnetic layer 2 on the magnetic recording medium 11. A
monomer gas is introduced into the plasma tube 4 from a

1 monomer cylinder 13 through a needle valve 14 which is
capable of adjusting the flow rate. The discharge is
commenced as an exciting coil 5 around the outer periphery
of the plasma tube 4 is supplied with a high-frequency power
5 from a high-frequency power supply 7 through a matching
device 6. A plasma formed as a result of the discharge is
blown from the plasma outlet 4b against the surface of the
magnetic layer 2 due to the pressure differential between
the plasma tube 4 and the vacuum vessel 8, so that a poly-
10 meric film is formed on the magnetic layer by the action of
the radical nucleus and ion nucleus which exist in the
plasma.

The blowing of plasma will become more effective
if a suitable means is employed for accelerating the ion
15 nucleus in the plasma, besides the utilization of the pres-
sure differential between the plasma tube 4 and the vacuum
vessel 8. Fig. 2 schematically shows a plasma tube with an
ion nucleus acceleration means. An electric field is
applied by a D.C. power supply 16 between an electrode 18
20 disposed in the plasma tube 17 and the magnetic layer on
the magnetic recording medium 17, such that the electrode
17 constitutes the anode. The ion nucleus in the plasma
produced as a result of application of high-frequency wave
to the exciting coil 15 is accelerated towards the magnetic
25 layer 2 by this electric field. The accelerated ion
nucleus collides with other types of nucleus such as the
radical nucleus and neutral nucleus in the plasma so that
the plasma is accelerated to blow out from the plasma outlet

1 19 with a high degree of efficiency thereby promoting the
formation of the film.

In the plasma CVD method, the monomer gas is once
decomposed into radicals which are then rebonded, so that
5 this method makes it possible to form a film of such an
extremely small thickness as could never be attained by the
coating type method, and can be applied to materials having
poor wettability, e.g., fluorine-containing organic matters.
In addition, the film exhibits a large affinity to the
10 magnetic layer because the film is formed in active state.

Fluorine-containing molecular protective films
of various thicknesses were formed by employing $C-C_4F_8$
(octafluorocyclobutane) on a vapor-deposited tape having a
magnetic layer which is composed of Co, Ni and their oxides,
15 thus forming test magnetic recording tapes. These test
tapes were subjected to a running durability test conducted
by using a video tape deck equivalent to an 8 m/m video
tape recorder sold by Kodak. The result of this test is
shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Relationship Between Protective Film Thickness and Running Durability

Protective film thickness	Contact angle (deg.)	Number of repetitional running cycles	Clogging and drop out (time/min)
Untreated 0	65	2-3 passes	1-2
2-3	90-95	5-100	1-2
5	100-110	100 or more	1-2
20	110	100 or more	50
100	110	100 or more	230

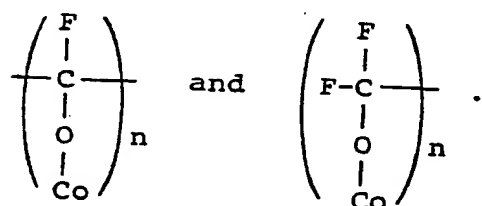
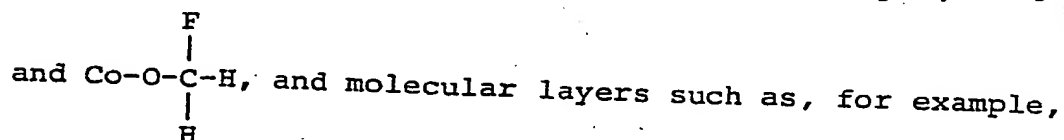
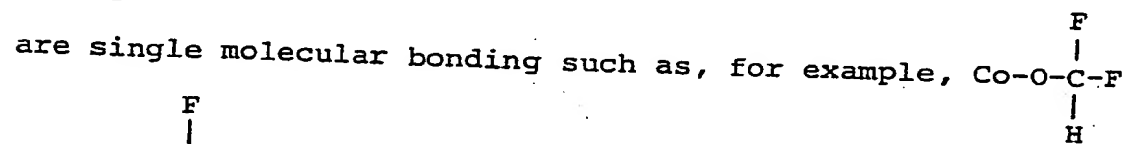
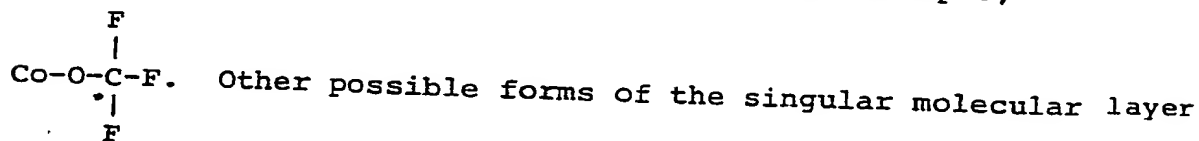
Note: Number of repetitional running cycle is the number of passes of repetitional running of the vapor-deposited tape on the deck under the condition of 20°C and 10 %RH, sustained by the tape until the tape exhibits 3 dB reduction of output power.

Contact angle means the angle formed between a solid wall and the free surface of a stationary liquid contacting the wall.

- 1 From Table 1, it will be seen that untreated vapor-deposited tape exhibits more than 3 dB of output reduction after only 2 to 3 passes, whereas the vapor-deposited tape with fluorine-containing protective film
- 5 withstood more than 50 to 100 passes of repetitional running. However, the risk of occurrence of troubles such as clogging of heat and drop out is closely related to the thickness of the fluorine-containing molecular protective film. Namely,

- 1 the frequency of occurrence of clogging of head and drop
out is drastically increased when the film thickness is
increased beyond 20 Å. In fact, clogging of head is caused
immediately after the start of running when the protective
5 film thickness is as large as 100 Å.

The magnetic layer of the vacuum-deposited tape
is composed of Co and Ni, and, in the surface region, these
constituents take the form of oxide or hydride such as Co-O
and Co-OH. In the initial stage of formation of the
10 fluorine-containing molecular protective film on this
magnetic layer by plasma CVD method using, for example,
C-C₄F₈ gas as the monomer gas, the magnetic layer surface
activated by the plasma and the fluorine-containing radicals
such as CF₂ and CF in the plasma are strongly bonded to
15 form a singular molecular layer such as, for example,



However, all the requirement for the construction
of the molecular layer is that the fluorine element is

1 bonded, and it is not always necessary that the molecular
layer has a regularity of molecular construction. The
molecular layer also can have double bond.

According to the invention, the protective film
5 is preferably a singular molecular layer, although the
invention does not exclude such a construction that bonds
similar to singular molecular bond are dispersed at intervals
greater than the molecular size of water. If the bonds are
dispersed at intervals greater than the molecular size of
10 water, water cannot be perfectly removed to leave a problem
concerning rust of the magnetic layer. The dispersion of
bonds at intervals smaller than the molecular size of water
cannot be attained by application method, and is possible
only with the plasma polymerization method as proposed by
15 the invention. The molecular layer and the bonds similar
to singular molecular bond may co-exist in the film and
such a film can be used as the protective film of the
recording medium in accordance with the invention if the
above-explained conditions are met.

20 As the plasma is blown further, fluorine-containing
molecular layer having structures such as, for example
 $\{CF_2\}_n$ and $\{CF_2-CHF\}_n$ are formed on the singular molecular
film.

Fig. 5 shows the result of an X-ray optoelectron
25 spectral analysis of the surface of the protective film
having a thickness equivalent to 5 \AA . Peaks indicating the
presence of CF , CF_2 and CF_3 are observed even in this film
having the thickness equivalent to 5 \AA , thus proving the

1 presence of fluorine. CH and CC exhibits greater peaks
than CF, CF₂ and CF₃. This may be attributed to the detec-
tion of C-H and C-C deposited to the film surface after the
film formation, as well as C-H and C-C existing on the
5 surface of the magnetic layer before the formation of film,
besides the CH and CC structures existing in the film
itself.

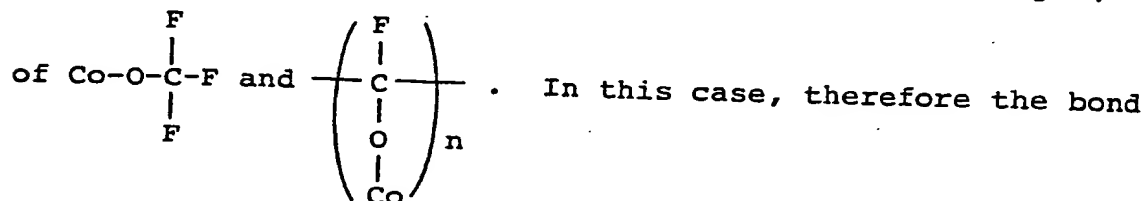
The contact angle of the fluorine-containing
molecular protective film is closely related to the amount
10 of fluorine existing in the film surface. That is, the
contact angle is increased as the amount of fluorine existing
in the film surface is increased such as to improve the
running performance and running durability.

Fig. 6 shows the kinematic coefficient of friction
15 μ exhibited by the vapor-deposited tape on which is formed
the fluorine-containing protective film of a thickness
equivalent to 5 \AA . In the case of the untreated tapes, the
kinematic coefficient of friction becomes unstable as the
number of passes of running is increased such as to cause
20 a stick slip, whereas the tapes with protective films of
thicknesses equivalent to 5 \AA stably showed kinematic coef-
ficient of friction of 0.2.

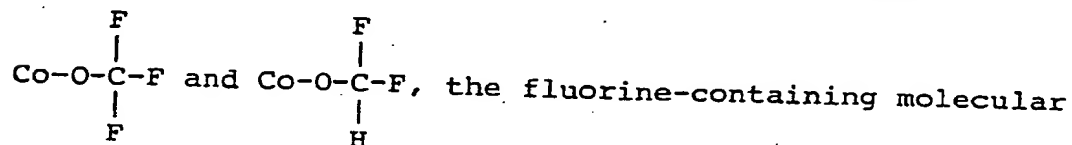
The contact angle of the protective film ranges
between 100 and 110° when the film thickness is equivalent
25 to 5 \AA , and the film having such a contact angle exhibits
a superior running durability. The contact angle, therefore,
can be used as an index of the running stability and running
durability. It has been confirmed that a sufficient running

1 durability is obtainable when the contact angle exceeds
100°C.

It is considered that, when the thickness of the
protective film is equivalent to 5 Å, the film is constituted
5 solely of a singular molecular layer such as for example,



between the magnetic layer and the protective film is very
strong, so that wear and coming off of the protective film
are reduced when used in sliding contact with the head and
10 guide posts, so that the product vapor-deposited tape ex-
hibits a superior running durability with reduced tendency
of clogging and drop out. In contrast, the protective film
having a thickness in excess of 20 Å suffers from the follow-
ing disadvantages. Namely, in such a thick film, although a
15 strong bonding between the magnetic layer and the protective
film is obtained in the interface therebetween by virtue
of the presence of structures such as for example,



protective film having structures such as for example,
20 $-(\text{CF}_2)_n-$ and $-(\text{CF}_2\text{-CHF})_n-$, formed on the structures in the
interface, exhibit only a small bonding force. In
consequence, the fluorine-containing molecular protective
film partially comes off when the tape is used in sliding

1 contact with the head and the guide posts, resulting in
troubles such as clogging and drop out. Therefore, when
the film thickness is increased beyond a value equivalent
to 5 \AA , the tendency of clogging and drop out is increased
5 as the film thickness becomes greater. In order to meet
both the requirement for high running durability and require-
ment for prevention of clogging and drop out, it is necessary
that the thickness of the protective film is not greater
than a value equivalent to 5 \AA . As stated before, however,
10 it is practically impossible to form such a thin film by
coating method, and can be conducted successfully only by
the plasma CVD method as suggested by this invention. As
mentioned above, although the protective film which is the
fluorine containing molecule singular layer remarkably
15 improves the travelling durability of a magnetic recording
medium including a metallic magnetic layer, general common
measures may be used in order to improve the practical
characteristics of the magnetic recording medium. For
example, the coating of a lubricant on the protective film
20 by which the travelling resistance of the magnetic recording
medium under a specific environmental condition such as, for
example, a high temperature and high humidity condition, a
low temperature and high humidity condition, etc. is
reduced, further enhances the basic advantages of the present
25 invention. The lubricant may be selectively used appro-
priately for the condition and methods of using the magnetic
recording medium.

As has been described, the invention provides a

1 magnetic recording medium and a method of producing the
same, wherein a protective film constituted by a singular
layer film of fluorine-containing molecular bodies, i.e.,
fluorine-containing molecular bodies having a film thick-
5 ness not greater than a value equivalent to 5 \AA , is formed
on the magnetic layer of a ferromagnetic material formed
on a non-magnetic substrate, thereby attaining a magnetic
recording medium which has a superior wear resistance and
which suffers from only a small friction coefficient and
10 reduction in the output power despite the presence of the
protective film. The formation of the protective film is
conducted by a plasma polymerization method in which the
plasma is generated in a vacuum vessel separate from the
section where the magnetic recording medium is placed.
15 With this arrangement, a stable control of generation of
plasma is attained to offer various practical advantages.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A magnetic recording medium comprising a non-magnetic substrate, a magnetic layer formed on the surface of said substrate from a ferromagnetic material, and a protective film formed on said magnetic layer, wherein said protective film is constituted by a singular layer of continuous or dispersed molecular structures in which carbon element and an element constituting said magnetic layer are bonded directly or indirectly through oxygen and at least one fluorine element is bonded to said carbon element.
2. A magnetic recording medium according to claim 1, wherein said protective film has a mean thickness not greater than a value equivalent to 5 \AA .
3. A magnetic recording medium according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said substrate is a plastic member in the form of a tape.
4. A magnetic recording medium according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said substrate is a plastic member in the form of a disk.
5. A magnetic recording medium according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said substrate is a metallic member in the form of a disk.
6. A magnetic recording medium according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said substrate is a glass member in the form of a disk.
7. A method of producing a magnetic recording medium comprising preparing a substrate of a non-magnetic material, forming a magnetic layer of a ferromagnetic material on

the surface of said substrate, and forming, by a plasma CVD method, a protective film of a fluorine-containing molecular body having a thickness not greater than a value equivalent to 5 \AA on the surface of said magnetic layer.

8. A method of producing a magnetic recording medium according to claim 7, wherein said plasma CVD method is carried out by using a system having two separate vacuum vessels such that a fluorine-containing organic gas or a mixture of a fluorine-containing organic gas and an inert gas is excited into the state of plasma which contains ion nucleus and radical nucleus of respective elements and mixture elements of said gas or mixture, as well as neutral nucleus and electrons in one of said vacuum vessels, said plasma being blown through a plasma blowing means onto the surface of said magnetic layer of said recording medium placed in the other vacuum vessel.

9. A method of producing a magnetic recording medium according to claim 8, wherein said plasma blowing means makes use of the pressure differential between two vacuum vessels.

10. A method of producing a magnetic recording medium according to claim 8 or 9, wherein an electric potential difference is formed between the plasma formed in one of said vacuum vessels and said recording medium placed in said the other vacuum vessel.

FIG. 1

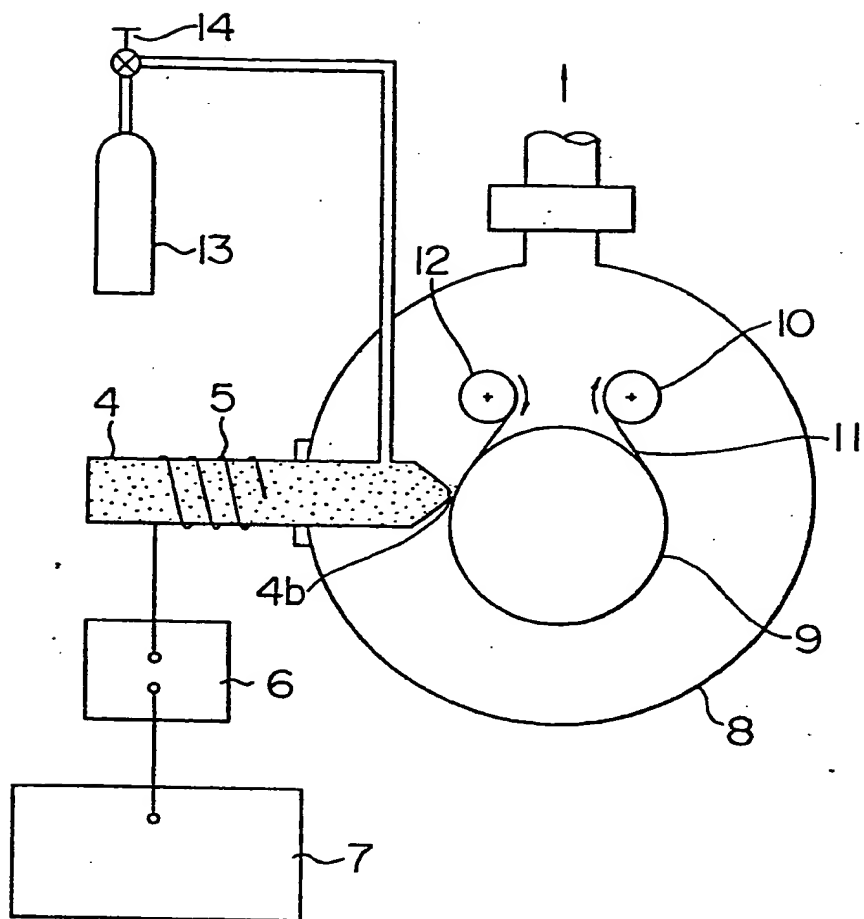


FIG. 2

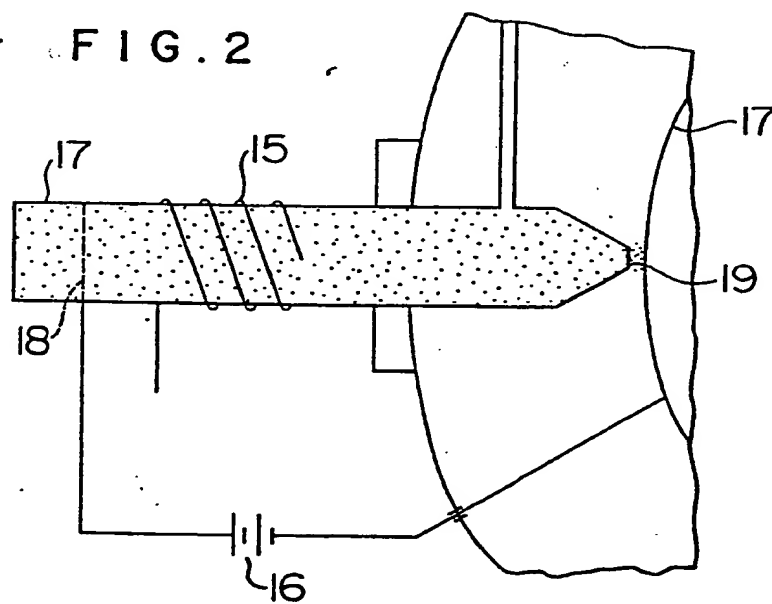


FIG. 3

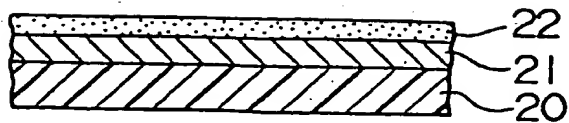


FIG. 4

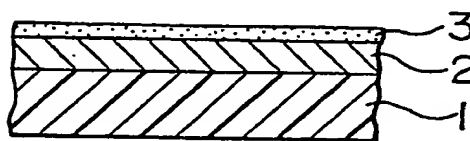


FIG. 5

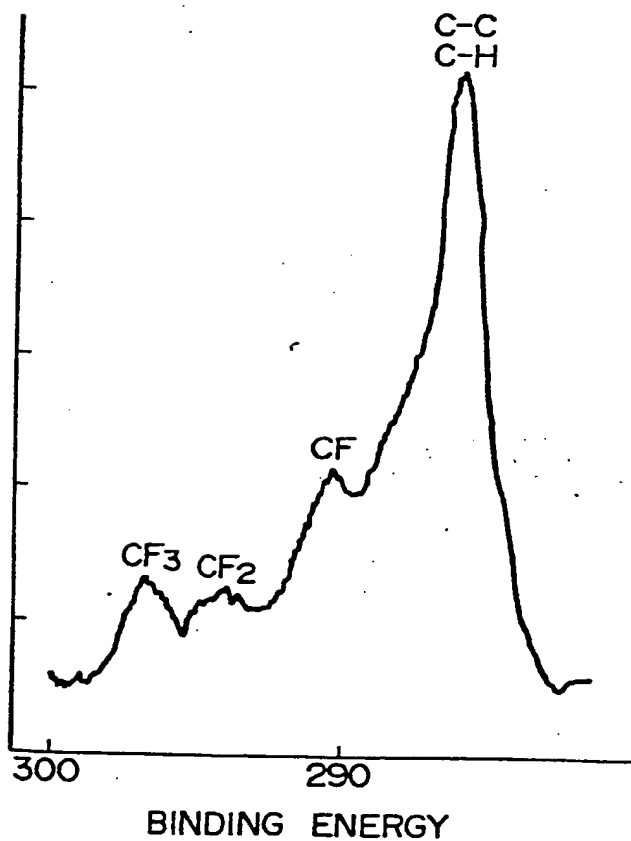


FIG. 6

